



Australian Government

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Australia-Japan FOUNDATION



*Board of the Australia-Japan Foundation
Submission to the 2017 Foreign Policy White Paper*

The Australia-Japan Foundation (AJF) was established by the Australian Government in 1976 to expand and develop contact and exchange between the peoples of Australia and Japan and to help build a positive image of Australia and Japan in each other's country. The AJF was the first specific body designated to promote bilateral understanding with another country in Asia, established by the Australian Government. It grew out of the 1976 Basic Treaty for Friendship and Cooperation between Australia and Japan. The Basic Treaty was a product of the desire at Government-level for greater people-to-people and institutional linkages to match the rapid developments in the economic relationship that followed the Commerce Agreement between Australia and Japan, signed in 1957.

Both the Commerce Agreement and the Basic Treaty were significant milestones in the process of laying the foundations of Australia's growing integration with the Asia-Pacific region. They also represented a clear-sighted and practical approach to the shared future of two former wartime enemies. The efforts to overcome difficult public sentiment at the time were a testament to the conviction of the Governments of the day that Australia's future lay with its immediate neighbours and that Australia and Japan were natural partners - a conviction that has been proved to be visionary.

Natural complementarities aside, a truly special, strategic partnership has since developed between our two nations. In an increasingly unpredictable global environment, both countries would regard the value of a like-minded neighbour with shared economic and strategic interests as well as common values and interests, ever more highly.

The depth of the relationship should neither be taken for granted nor treated lightly. It needs ongoing investment of ideas and resources, and a sustained commitment at all levels towards constant evolution and renewal, to ensure that the critical importance of the relationship continues to be fully understood, protected and leveraged by subsequent generations.

At a time where the Indo-Asia Pacific is undergoing dynamic change and economic growth, it is vital that as a nation we not only make the most of the opportunities offered by these new developments but also continue to nurture long-established relationships that have served us so well.

Japan is Australia's closest and most mature partner in Asia; its role as both a strategic and economic partner is fundamentally important. A shared commitment to democracy, human rights and the rule of law, as well as common approaches to international security underpin a broad alignment of our interests for the foreseeable future. Australia and Japan's respective stable political, business and investment environments make Australia a critical supplier to Japan of minerals, energy and high-quality food products; and Japan a large, stable export market and substantial source of direct foreign investment for Australia. Australia and Japan are also increasingly partners providing services to each other and together in third countries. Japan remains the third largest economy and one of the most advanced countries in the world. The recently concluded Japan Australia Economic Partnership Agreement, which the AJF actively promoted, will further strengthen the bilateral economic relationship.



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The AJF, and its support for a very wide range of bilateral activities, is an integral feature of the ongoing commitment and effort required. Looking forward, there are a number of areas for closer bilateral collaboration:

Youth: AJF's focus on youth is a response to the investment required to engage future generations and the future leaders of the bilateral relationship. AJF's grants for projects such as the inaugural Australia-Japan Youth Dialogue is a solid example of the support AJF can provide.

Gender: As Japan moves inevitably towards greater gender equality, there is much that Australia can do to encourage these developments and ensure Australian women are more involved with their counterparts in Japan. This includes the potential for Australian business and governance groups to share some of the business-wide initiatives that have worked in Australia to lift the participation of women in corporate and Board roles.

Demographic change and social policy responses: Japan has pressing demographic and social challenges, namely a rapidly ageing population combined with a low birth-rate, and an ageing and declining rural population that is contributing to chronic labour shortages in the agricultural sector. Japan is already addressing these problems but Australia can collaborate through science, innovation and Australia's migration experience given Australia's population is facing similar demographic challenges albeit at a different pace. Australia has much to contribute to and profit from a collaborative and innovative approach on these issues and it will gain from Japan's benefit of hindsight.

Sports Diplomacy: Sport has the ability to transcend political, social, economic, gender and cultural barriers and is an important and growing bond between Australia and Japan that should be nurtured and expanded. Japan's investment in sports diplomacy, not least through hosting major international sporting events including the Rugby World Cup in 2019 and the Summer Olympic/Paralympic Games in 2020 (the second time it has hosted these Games), underscores the weight Japan places on cultural diplomacy and shaping the way others view Japan. The AJF has noted the recently signed Sports Memorandum of Cooperation with Japan offers enormous opportunities where again, Australia benefits from significant complementarities and can take advantage of natural assets. A number of Australian elite sportsmen and women currently reside and participate in Japan and vice versa. These exchanges traditionally took place in golf, swimming, baseball, rugby and soccer but there is potential for much more. Surfing will feature for the first time at the 2020 Olympic Games as an official sport. Potential Australian beneficiaries are diverse: tourism, high performance schools that showcase Australian cutting-edge technology and training facilities, sports medicine, surf-wear and surf-gear designers, media and many other related businesses. Multiply this across the various sporting connections and the opportunities are immense.

Scientific Innovation: With Japan's Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) strengths and Australia's expertise in research and innovative solutions, there are enormous benefits to gain for Australia from a closer partnership with Japan and from increasing recognition by Japan of Australia's scientific innovation strengths. For instance, Japan has world leading systems and approaches to the future of manufacturing, known as the e-Factory. The Australian group working on the future of manufacturing, Prime Minister's Industry 4.0 Taskforce, would benefit greatly from understanding the work of and collaborating with e-Factory leaders.



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Cultural Diplomacy and Education: Since World War Two, Japan has arguably been the most dominant Asian influence on Australian culture. This includes art, architecture, craft and design (including landscape design), fashion and animation. Australia is developing a growing and highly respected reputation in Japan across a broad cultural spectrum including in jazz and innovative performing arts. On the education side, Japanese is the most studied language in Australian schools and universities, enhanced by over 650 sister-school relationships. However, ongoing investment to raise cultural awareness through education beyond schools and into the workplace will be essential to maximise opportunities. By investing in creating a deeper understanding of each other's cultural history, contemporary cultural norms and languages, Japan and Australia can build on more than 40 years of people-to-people relationships. These relationships, often fostered through the agency of the arts, education or Australian studies sectors, frequently produce the most enduring and resilient returns on investment for their partners. While Australia shares many common values with Japan, at a broader public level these values can find their most powerful expressions in the cultural, educational, and sporting arenas. These exchanges – sometimes called ‘the stories that we tell each other’ – can very efficiently build the trust and respect essential to any good and lasting relationship.

Regional collaboration on social issues: Close knowledge collaboration on social issues of mutual interest could have broader applications across the region. The example of Australia and Japan's successful post-war reconciliation and more generally a close partnership approach could allow for greater regional acceptance of an enhanced role for Japan in the region. Australia and Japan have potential to provide partnership and leadership in a number of areas to assist third countries and contribute to a more prosperous, stable Asia-Pacific region.

How AJF will contribute to a multidimensional bilateral relationship with Japan

The AJF has already taken steps to ensure that its new Strategic Plan 2017-2022 emphasises several themes that apply to all its programs, namely ‘Youth’; ‘Gender, Equality and Inclusion’; and ‘Innovation’ in order to address the challenges and opportunities in the bilateral relationship to 2022 and beyond. AJF has an important role to play in offering strategic guidance not only to the Government but to the Australian community about the Australia-Japan relationship and encouraging the people-to-people and institutional linkages across broad sectors to ensure an enduring trusted and textured partnership beyond mere transaction.

‘Connected-up’ public diplomacy

AJF's public diplomacy activities extend beyond the grant program and into broader outreach activities. These activities seek to engage and foster an inclusive relationship and dialogue with AJF alumni, the Australian community with interests in Japan, Japanese with interests in Australia, and Japanese entities in Australia. At AJF's initiative, we will align with other like-minded programs, such as the New Colombo Plan, by co-hosting AJF's annual networking event to further maximise our (and their) outreach and influence. Social media is proving to be another effective and cost-effective mode of external engagement for AJF since starting our social media presence 18 months ago. AJF has successfully utilised social media to promote AJF's objectives through a targeted and focused approach but lacks resources to fully exploit this medium.



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Outlook

Japan's stable political outlook offers an excellent opportunity to consolidate many areas of the partnership at the government and community level. Huge numbers of Japanese and Australians share educational experiences at school. It is important that this exposure continues beyond the school years. More needs to be done to learn about each other's particular business and cultural practices in order to maximise the potential at non-government levels. Concerted Australian Government commitment to public diplomacy, including through the AJF, will be necessary to help overcome this through ongoing nurturing and investment in new generations to ensure opportunities to develop strong cultural awareness extend beyond the classroom and into professional workplace environments.

In this dynamic and challenging era where countries need to respond adroitly and adapt policy to rapid or major changes, it is important to reflect that people-to-people relationships often prove to be the most durable element in any relationship and, ultimately, the most strategically well-founded. Formal relationship structures and mechanisms aside, an important and direct path to establishing mutually productive country-to-country relationships is through soft diplomacy, which will often transcend day-to-day transactional activity and interest in the other party.



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Attachment A - Current AJF Board members

Mr Murray McLean AO, Chairman (Victoria)

Executive Chairman, Dunmore McLean Pty Ltd and formerly a senior officer of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, most recently serving as Ambassador to Japan (2004-2011)

Term: 1 January 2012 – 23 February 2020

Mr Peter Cleary (South Australia)

Oil and Gas Consultant

Term: 1 June 2015 to 1 June 2018

Mr Mark Connors (Queensland)

State Manager QLD – FIIG

Term: 7 February 2017 to 7 February 2020

Dr Bronwyn Evans (New South Wales)

Chief Executive Officer, Standards Australia

Term: 1 June 2015 to 1 June 2018

Associate Professor Doug Hall AM (Victoria)

Writer and critic and Honorary Fellow at the School of Culture and Communications, Faculty of Arts, University of Melbourne

Term: 22 March 2013 - 22 March 2017

Ms Debra Hazelton (Tokyo - Japan)

General Manager, Global Career Management Division, Mizuho Financial Group, Inc.

Term: 1 October 2015 to 1 October 2018

Mr Chris Saines CNZM (Queensland)

Director, Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art

Term: 23 March 2017 to 23 March 2020

Professor Veronica Taylor (Australian Capital Territory)

Research Professor of Law and Regulation, ANU Regulatory Institutions Network (RegNet)

Term: 1 July 2015 to 1 July 2018